

Penang to take back dam

PBAPP: We need access to meet needs for next dry season

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WATER infrastructure assets in Penang and other states were transferred to the Federal Government in 2011.

The federal debts owed by the state for building these assets are then converted into lease payments.

Today, Penang is ready to take back the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project (MDEP) as a critical strategic drought project.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said MDEP is a Federal Government project financed by a federal grant.

"Its implementation was one of the key conditions that was agreed upon when Penang migrated to the National Water Services Restructuring Initiative (NWSRI) in 2011.

"Today, the MDEP is not fully functional yet but it is prudent for us to reassume management of the Mengkuang Dam.

"Due to abnormally low rainfall from climate change since last year, the effective capacities of the Ayer Itam and Teluk Bahang dams are abnormally low.

"We will need full access to raw water reserves of the Mengkuang Dam to manage continuous water supply services during the next dry season which is expected to start from January 2021.

"As such, the primary rationale for the handover of the MDEP is risk management," Jaseni said in a statement on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the state agreed to the handover of Phase 1 and Phase 2A of the MDEP on Sept 24 during a



A photo of the Mengkuang Dam at 73.4% capacity. — Filepic

meeting with Environment and Water Minister Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man in Putrajaya.

"We were told that land acquisition is in final stages for the implementation of Phase 2B of MDEP and that studies on Phase 2C and the construction of a new barrage at Rantau Panjang will be discussed with the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department for implementation.

"Thus, we are looking forward to the timely implementation of Phases 2B and 2C of the MDEP as well as the construction of the new barrage.

"Since the Environment and Water Ministry has stated its intentions to complete Phases 2B and 2C of the MDEP, the state agreed to the handover and an

official ceremony will be held on Oct 26 within Mengkuang Dam grounds," he said.

Phase 1 includes expansion and associated works to increase the maximum raw water storage capacity from 22,300 million litres to 73,500 million litres, and was completed in 2017.

Phase 2A involved the upgrading of the Mak Sulong Pumping Station to upgrade raw water delivery capacity and enable drawdown of more raw water from the dam during droughts. It was also completed in 2017.

Phases 2B and 2C are pending. They involve the laying of 7km of 1.6m-diameter mild steel pipelines from the Mak Sulong Pumping Station to the Sungai Dua Canal and the construction of Lahar Yooi Pumping Station with 440 million

litres per day (MLD) capacity.

Chow added that they are urging the Federal Government to expedite the two remaining phases.

"Without the Phase 2B pipeline, the maximum volume of water that may be drawn down from the dam is limited to 300 MLD.

"Last year, Penang's average daily water consumption was 843 MLD. As such, a maximum drawdown of 300 MLD is insufficient.

"Without the Phase 2C Lahar Yooi Pumping Station, we cannot pump raw water from Sungai Muda to refill the Mengkuang Dam quickly during the wet seasons.

"Thus, Penang needs a fully functional MDEP as soon as possible because we are a water-stressed state," he said.